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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2193  
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
USEU BRUSSELS 0070  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY KAMPALA  
AMEMBASSY ASMARA  
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 004189

LONDON FOR YOUNG

PARIS FOR MORAN

E.O. 12356: 2005  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: BASHIR TAKES CHARGE?

REF: KHARTOUM 3996

¶1. COL. (RETD) MARTIN MALWAL AROP, A LONG TIME EMBASSY CONTACT, TOLD THE DCM LAST NIGHT THAT PRESIDENT OMAR EL BASHIR IS ASSERTING HIS AUTHORITY AS COMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES TO REDUCE THE INFLUENCE OF THE NATIONAL ISLAMIC FRONT (NIF) ON THE GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN. MALWAL SAID THAT BASHIR RECENTLY CONVENED A MEETING OF SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS TO SOLICIT SUPPORT FOR THIS COURSE OF ACTION. AT THIS MEETING, BASHIR SPECIFICALLY ASKED BRIGADIER EL HADI ABDULLAH MOHAMED, COMMANDER OF THE HEADQUARTERS BRIGADE AND KNOWN NIFER, IF HE WOULD SUPPORT HIM. (FYI: THE MISSION OF BRIGADIER HADI'S BRIGADE IS TO DEFEND THE CAPITAL AND MILITARY HEADQUARTERS AGAINST A COUP ATTEMPT. HADI WAS CHOSEN TO COMMAND THIS UNIT BECAUSE OF HIS SYMPATHY FOR THE NIF. END FYI.) HADI AND THE OTHER OFFICERS PRESENT AT THE MEETING PROMISED BASHIR THEIR SUPPORT.

¶2. MARTIN DID NOT KNOW THE PROXIMATE CAUSE OF BASHIR'S ACTION BUT SAID MANY THINGS WERE GOING ON THAT OF WHICH BASHIR EITHER DID NOT APPROVE OR WAS UNAWARE. THE DCM WONDERED WHY IT HAD TAKEN BASHIR SIX YEARS TO FIGURE THIS OUT. MARTIN DEFENDED BASHIR, WHO SAID HE WAS A MILITARY ACADEMY BATCH MATE OF HIS, SAYING IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE JUNE 30, 1989 COUP THAT BROUGHT BASHIR TO POWER HE HAD CALLED ON ALL ELEMENTS TO RALLY TO THE GOVERNMENT BUT ONLY THE NIF HAD COME FORWARD. HE ALSO ARGUED THAT BASHIR WAS SIMPLY UNAWARE OF ACTIVITIES SOME OF THE NIF MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT HAD UNDERTAKEN. FINALLY, MARTIN SAID THAT AS TIME PASSED BASHIR FEARED THAT EVEN IF HE WANTED TO MAKE CHANGES THE NIF HAD SO INFILTRATED ALL ELEMENTS OF THE SUDANESE POWER STRUCTURE THAT HE COULD NOT BE SURE THAT ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE THINGS SUCCEED. MARTIN SAID THAT VIRTUALLY EVERYONE AROUND BASHIR WAS A NIF LOYALIST AND THE MOST LIKELY OUTCOME OF BASHIR'S ATTEMPT TO ASSERT AUTHORITY WILL BE HIS ASSASSINATION.

¶3. MARTIN SAID BASHIR'S NEXT STEP WOULD BE TO PURGE SUDAN'S SECURITY SERVICE OF THOSE LOYAL TO OUSTED CHIEF NAFI ALI NAFI (REPORTING IN OTHER CHANNELS INDICATES THIS MAY ALREADY HAVE BEGUN). AS HAS BEEN HINTED IN THE LOCAL MEDIA, MARTIN ALSO PREDICTED FURTHER CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT.

¶4. COMMENT: COL. MARTIN HAS MAINTAINED EXCELLENT CONTACTS WITH THE SUDANESE ARMY. AS MEMBER OF BASHIR'S REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND COUNCIL HE WAS KNOWN BE CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT. THE FACT THAT MARTIN HAS CONSORTED WITH U.S. DIPLOMATS AND OTHERS NOT SEEN TO BE FRIENDLY TO THIS REGIME WITHOUT HARASSMENT OR HINDERENCE ALSO INDICATES A HIGH LEVEL PATRON. MARTIN'S VIEW OF THE IMMEDIATE POST-COUP RELATIONSHIP VIOLATES CONVENTIONAL WISDOM BUT THE REALITY IS NOT KNOWN WITH CERTAINTY. HIS INFORMATION HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN ENTIRELY ACCURATE (E.G., LAST YEAR HE TOLD US THAT THE GOS HAD LAUNCHED A THREE PRONGED

OFFENSIVE WHEN, IN FACT, IT HAD ONLY PLANNED SUCH AN OFFENSIVE). WE HAVE NO CORROBORATION, BUT WE BELIEVE THERE IS AT LEAST A KERNEL OF TRUTH IN WHAT HE HAS TOLD US AND THEREFORE REPORT IT.

¶5. SINCE THE WHOLESale LEADERSHIP CHANGES IN THE SECURITY SERVICES AND THE LESS SWEEPING CABINET CHANGES ON AUGUST 12 (SEE REFTel), WE HAVE SENSED THAT FISSURES MIGHT BE OCCURRING IN WHAT HAD BEEN VIEWED AS A MONOLITHIC GOS/NIF REGIME. BASHIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT YESTERDAY THAT ALL POLITICAL DETAINEES WOULD BE RELEASED AND THAT ELECTIONS FOR BOTH PARLIAMENT AND THE PRESIDENCY WOULD TAKE PLACE NEXT YEAR ADD TO THAT SENSE.

¶5. WE CANNOT, OF COURSE, BE CERTAIN WHAT PROMPTED BASHIR TO ACT AFTER SIX YEARS OF NIF MISBEHAVIOR BUT THE MUBARAK ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT COULD WELL HAVE DONE IT. BASHIR KNOWS THAT AT SOME POINT THE ETHIOPIANS WILL GO PUBLIC. HE COULD SIMPLY BE PREPARING THE GROUND FOR A DEFENSE THAT WOULD ADMIT PROBLEMS BUT CLAIM THEY ARE SOLVED, OR HE COULD BE AFTER A MORE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN HIS GOVERNMENT. IF THE LATTER IS TRUE, HIS LIFE MAY WELL BE IN DANGER. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

CARNEY